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Information/Action

Professional Services Committee

Development and Potential Consolidation of Examinations for Languages Other Than English

Executive Summary: This report provides an update on the development of examinations for less commonly taught languages other than English. An option is also presented for the Commission's consideration regarding seeking stakeholder input to consider the potential consolidation of the examination structure for examinations in languages other than English.

Recommended Action: That the Commission provide staff direction concerning the process for addressing the development of examinations for less commonly taught languages other than English

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Strategic Plan Goal: 1

Promote educational excellence through the preparation and certification of professional educators.

- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the preparation of professional educators.
- ◆ Sustain high quality standards for the performance of credential candidates.

Development and Potential Consolidation of Examinations for Languages Other Than English

I. Background

Approximately 33% of credential candidates pursuing a single subject credential in a language other than English satisfy their subject matter requirement by passing a Commission-approved subject matter examination. This examination is the set of CSET LOTE (Languages Other Than English) tests. At its meeting of April 4-5, 2006 the Commission considered the possibility of establishing a set of criteria for determining whether an additional CSET LOTE examination would be approved for development. Staff had initially planned to present a proposed policy to the Commission at the July 31-August 1, 2006 meeting. However, several circumstances arose between April and July that affect the decision regarding Commission adoption of such a policy at the present time. These circumstances are described below.

Current Legislation and the State 2006-2007 Budget

Several pieces of recent and proposed legislation have a bearing on the development of additional subject matter examinations in less commonly taught languages other than English:

- SB 420 (Horton) mandates that the Commission develop a CSET examination in Filipino for implementation in 2007;
- AB 2913 (Frommer) as amended June 28, 2006, would mandate, parallel to SB 420, that the Commission submit an expenditure plan to the Department of Finance no later than January 2007 for the development of a subject matter examination in Armenian.

In addition, the 2006-07 state budget specifies that the Commission shall use \$75,000 in Title II Carryover funding from the California Department of Education on a one-time basis for the “development of a language exam template and its application to several specific language exams. After creating the template, the Filipino language shall be given priority for specific exam development, followed by the Hmong, Cantonese, Armenian, Khmer, Arabic, and Farsi languages in that order, though test development may occur simultaneously.”

In effect, the decision as to whether to proceed with the development of additional CSET LOTE examinations, and in which languages these examinations would be developed, has already been made outside the purview of the Commission by the Legislature through provisions contained in the state budget for 2006-2007. This situation essentially renders the development of Commission policy regarding additional CSET LOTE examinations moot for the immediate present, as the decision has already been made to move forward with seven additional CSET LOTE examinations for next fiscal year.

II. Potential New Policy Option: Examinations Consolidation

In looking at the effective use of Commission resources when developing the new mandated CSET LOTE examinations, staff reviewed the status of all of the Commission-owned language examinations. The Commission owns two sets of language examinations, the CSET LOTE examinations and the BCLAD (Bilingual, Crosscultural Language and Academic Development) examinations. The current contract with National Evaluation Systems (NES), the Commission's external contractor for both CSET and BCLAD, is in force for one more year, 2006-07, and expires on October 31, 2007.

The current CSET contract includes development activities related to language examinations. There is now a legislative mandate to develop additional CSET language examinations, with one-time resources available from Title II Carryover funds to support the development effort and a short time frame for accomplishing the development (by September 30, 2007).

The current BCLAD contract is for the administration of the examination only, and does not include any development activities related to revalidating, updating or expanding the BCLAD examinations. The Bilingual Workgroup has recommended revalidation and redevelopment of the BCLAD examinations, especially in the areas of updating the cultural content as well as the methodology content to cover an expanded range of instructional settings such as two-way immersion and other classroom organization options. Further, the Bilingual Workgroup also recommended the expansion of BCLAD to additional less commonly taught languages.

During the course of staff discussions about how best to meet the legislative mandate, the opportunity to rethink how the Commission addresses language examinations in general led to a potential new option: to look at the possibility of consolidating Commission-owned language examinations. The potential for consolidating these two sets of language examinations might be feasible and might have significant merit. In considering this issue, it would be important to gather input from stakeholders within both the bilingual and the foreign language communities regarding the potential benefits and feasibility of consolidation of language examinations. Listed below are several key topics of discussion relevant to the potential rationale for, benefits of, and feasibility of language examinations consolidation that could form the framework for stakeholder discussion and input. These are:

1) *Identifying Overlap Between BCLAD and CSET LOTE Examinations.* The chart below documents which language examinations are currently in place for BCLAD, which are currently in place for CSET LOTE, and which new CSET language examinations will be addressed through the 2006-2007 state budget.

Current BCLAD Examinations	Current CSET LOTE Examinations	2006-07 State Budget CSET LOTE Examinations to be Developed
• Spanish	• Spanish	
* Hmong		* Hmong
* Cantonese		* Cantonese
• Korean	• Korean	
• Vietnamese	• Vietnamese	
* Armenian		* Armenian
* Filipino		* Filipino
• Mandarin	• Mandarin	
* Khmer		* Khmer
• Punjabi	• Punjabi	
	French	
	German	
	Japanese	
	American Sign	
	Russian	
		Arabic
		Farsi

- Indicates a language for which there is currently both a BCLAD and a CSET exam
- * Indicates a language for which there is currently a BCLAD exam and a proposed 2006-07 Budget-Mandated CSET exam

2) *Identifying the Most Efficient Use of Resources.* Maintaining the current two sets of language examinations is costly, as both sets of examinations require periodic development, revalidation, and updating. The Bilingual Workgroup made recommendations at the Commission meeting of May-June 2006 concerning the revalidation of current BCLAD specifications and the development of additional language examinations. However, because of the small numbers of examinees, there would likely be little interest on the part of examinations contractors to undertake this work. On the other hand, the Commission has been directed to use \$75,000 in short-term Federal Title II Carryover funds to develop several new CSET language examinations. These resources might be useable to support the purposes of both BCLAD and CSET.

There are also significant costs relating to the relative extent of the volume of candidates for each of the two current sets of language-related examinations. All of the Commission-owned examinations are required to be self-supporting through candidate fees. The fees proposed by test contractors will vary according to the projected total numbers of test-

takers for the specific examinations. Areas in which there are few to no examinees, such as the low incidence languages, are costly for both the Commission and for candidates. The table below shows the comparative volume of test takers for the BCLAD and the CSET LOTE examinations from July 2003- June 2005.

	BCLAD	CSET LOTE
Spanish	2,920	519
Hmong	12	
Cantonese	12	
Korean	56	11
Vietnamese	28	2
Armenian	6	
Mandarin	30	32
Filipino	12	
Khmer	2	
Punjabi	0	2
French		87
German		14
Japanese		24
Russian		2
American Sign		(new exam)

3) *Identifying Areas of Content Overlap between BCLAD and CSET LOTE Examinations.* The following table shows the relationship between the content tested on the BCLAD examinations and that tested on the CSET LOTE examinations. The italicized topics are shared by both examinations, although the scope and the emphasis of the content covered by the BCLAD and the CSET examinations may differ to some degree.

BCLAD Examinations Subtests	CSET LOTE Examinations Subtests
	Subtest I: General Linguistics and Linguistics of the Target Language
Test 4: Methodology for Primary Language Instruction	
<i>Test 5: The Culture of Emphasis</i>	<i>Subtest II: Literary and Cultural Texts and Traditions; Cultural Analysis and Comparisons</i>
<i>Test 6: The Language of Emphasis: Listening</i>	<i>Subtest III: Language and Communication: Listening Comprehension</i>
<i>Test 6: The Language of Emphasis: Reading</i>	<i>Subtest III: Language and Communication: Reading Comprehension</i>
<i>Test 6: The Language of Emphasis: Speaking</i>	<i>Subtest III: Language and Communication: Oral Expression</i>
<i>Test 6: The Language of Emphasis: Writing</i>	<i>Subtest III: Language and Communication: Written Expression</i>

(Topics shared across examinations are in italics)

Note: Each subtest has its own passing standard and can be taken individually

4) *Identifying potential benefits of streamlining the language examinations structure.* The overall examinations structure for individuals who want to use a language other than English, whether in a bilingual setting (including newer modalities such as two-way immersion programs), or in a second-language/foreign language instructional setting could potentially be simplified. For example, both the foreign language and the BCLAD specifications share much in common in terms of the knowledge, skills and abilities required to teach in another language regardless of the overall purpose of that instruction (i.e., bilingual vs. second/foreign language learning). Simplifying the language examinations structure might streamline the process for foreign language teachers to be able to work within bilingual instructional settings, and for bilingual teachers to be able to work within foreign language instructional settings.

5) *Reviewing the need and rationale for Commission policy and criteria for determining whether to add additional language examinations in the future.* While the legislative direction in terms of developing seven additional language examinations for 2006-07 is clear, left open is the question as to whether the Commission should develop a policy and criteria for determining whether additional language examinations may be needed in the future beyond 2007.

Summary and Staff Direction

Staff requests direction from the Commission to obtain stakeholder input regarding the feasibility of consolidating Commission-owned language examinations. Because time is of the essence in terms of using the one-time Title II Carryover fiscal resources to support language examinations development, and because the window of opportunity is short (ending in September 2007), staff suggests that if the Commission adopts this course of action, that the stakeholder input meetings take place as soon as possible.

Staff also requests direction as to whether the Commission wishes to pursue the development of a policy and criteria for determining in the future whether to develop additional language examinations, or whether the Commission would prefer to defer that issue at the present time.